

Golden State Seal Merit Diploma–2000

Questions and Answers

What is the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma?

Assembly Bill 3488, approved in July 1996, called for the development of the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma (Golden State Diploma) to recognize graduates who have demonstrated mastery of the high school curriculum in designated content areas. Since the program began in 1997, more than 9,024 graduates have received the honors diploma: 1,415 diplomas to 1997 graduates, 2,722 to 1998 graduates, and over 4,887 to 1999 graduates. To date, more than 1,094 seniors have qualified for the 2000 Golden State Diploma.

Do the Golden State Diploma requirements change the voluntary nature of the Golden State Examinations?

Assembly Bill 3488, establishing the Golden State Diploma, requires that districts make the Golden State Examinations available for any student who wishes to participate.

How do students qualify for the Golden State Diploma?

Students must attain high honors, honors, or recognition designations on six Golden State Examinations to be eligible for the Golden State Diploma. Currently, these achievement levels must be reached on the Golden State Examinations in U.S. history, written composition or reading/literature, a mathematics exam, a science exam, and two other Golden State Examinations of the student's choice.

What Golden State Examinations are currently offered?

There currently are thirteen Golden State Examinations offered: first-year algebra, geometry, high school mathematics, U.S. history, economics, government/civics, biology, chemistry, second-year coordinated science, physics, reading/literature, written composition, and Spanish language.

Which Golden State Examinations can be used for the optional exams?

Once students have taken the four required exams, other Golden State Examinations can be used as the two optional exams. Currently, this would include exams in math, language arts, and science not used for the requirements and the economics, government/civics, and Spanish language exams.

Can students take the exams at any time after completing the courses?

Students who are enrolled in a GSE subject area at the time the examination is given and students who took the course since the previous test administration may take the exam. Exceptions are written composition, reading/literature, high school mathematics, and Spanish language. The exams in language arts and high school mathematics are designed to test mastery of the high school curriculum and are not attached to a specific course. Students in either grade eleven or twelve can take the exams in written composition and reading/literature. The high school mathematics examination is intended for students who have completed three years of high school mathematics. The content of this exam is based on the standards adopted by the State Board of Education for algebra I, geometry, algebra II, and probability and statistics. Students completing a second-year integrated mathematics course may take either the first-year algebra exam, the geometry exam, or both. Students may take the Spanish language examination at the end of their second year of Spanish or its equivalent. Students are eligible to take each GSE only one time.

How can students apply for the Diploma?

Individual students do not need to apply to the state for the Golden State Diploma. This is done on their behalf by their school districts through a certification form that districts forward to the state.

Do districts need to send student records to the CDE as part of the certification?

No. Each spring the California Department of Education (CDE) sends a certification form to each district. The district is to list each eligible student, and the district superintendent's signature is to certify that the students listed have met the Golden State Diploma requirements.

How do districts verify student records?

Districts are responsible for keeping records of individual Golden State Examination accomplishments. In 1997, each district received a data disk containing GSE results from previous years to help compile individual records of achievement. Districts will continue to receive disks with GSE results following each administration of the exams.

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What does the Golden State Diploma look like?

The Golden State Diploma follows a traditional diploma design with the official state seal in gold and is signed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the President of the State Board of Education, and the District Superintendent and Board President. A sample of the Golden State Diploma appears below.

What if our schools cannot administer the Golden State Examinations on the scheduled dates?

A testing window has been made available for those districts that cannot test on the established testing dates. The testing window for winter 2000 extends from Monday, January 10, to Tuesday, February 1. For spring 2000, the window extends from Monday, May 1, through Wednesday, May 31. Districts testing outside the established window are required to complete the winter 2000 or spring 2000 *Request for Alternate Test Dates* form. This written request must include the proposed dates for giving the exams and the reason for the request.

Will the results from the winter and spring testing be back in time for graduation?

Every effort is made to have the Golden State Examination results from winter testing distributed to districts and schools during the month of May. Spring results are distributed in October.

More questions?

If you have general questions about the Golden State Examinations or the Golden State Diploma, call the Standards and Assessment Division of the CDE at (916) 657-3011, fax (916) 657-4964, or e-mail at star@cde.ca.gov.

